

“DC Water Cares Program” Emergency Residential Relief Program Public Hearing

By Stephen Dudek, Manager Water Services Division

On Wednesday, January 13, 2021, at 6:30 PM, the DC Water Board hosted a public hearing on the “DC Water Cares Program” Emergency Residential Relief Program. DC Water Board Chair Tommy Wells opened the public hearing with commentary about the effect the COVID-19 has on DC Water's consumers and stressed that DC Water is taking the necessary steps to assist customers. DC Water understands the importance of water, "Water is Life," especially in the pandemic.

Before public testimony, Mr. Wells introduced Ms. Carolyn MacKool, DC Water's Director of Customer Care. Ms. MacKool presented on the “DC Water Cares Program.” DC Water approved \$3 million in water assistance for FY 2021 and an additional \$5 million in aid in FY 2022. She reiterated Mr. Wells's comments that DC Water understands the stress and impact COVID-19 has on DC Water's consumers. For example, in November 2020, there were 14,733 delinquent cases, an increase of 9,933 cases from the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020).

DC Water consumers are responsible for paying their water bill during the pandemic and the Public Health Emergency. The presentation highlighted two available water assistance programs for DC Water consumers. The first program is the three-tier Customer Assistance Program – CAP, CAP2, CAP3- that provides monthly discounts by reducing the Clean Rivers Impervious Area Charge) CRIAC fee. The eligible customers may receive an approximate monthly deduction from \$15 to \$77.

The second program is the “Emergency Relief program” authorized by the District Government. The program assists consumers with their outstanding bills during the Public Health Emergency and 105 days thereafter. Eligible customers (with incomes up to 80% of the Area Median Income) may receive up to \$2,000 in one-time emergency assistance per fiscal year. The emergency program does allow individuals who are not the customer of record to qualify and access the funding. The individual seeking assistance will have to establish proof of responsibility.

The “DC Water Cares Program” will supplement the District Government's Emergency Relief Assistance when consumers use all the District allocated funds. For more information about the available programs and the application, please visit <https://www.dewater.com/customer-assistance> and <https://doee.dc.gov/service/criacrelief>.

Before the hearing concluded, Assistant People's Counsel (APC) Grace Soderberg provided oral testimony. On behalf of People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye, APC Soderberg applauded DC Water for the positive development of creating the "DC Water Cares Program." APC Soderberg encouraged DC Water to utilize Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to inform the public about the water assistance programs. Lastly, APC Soderberg requested DC Water to provide arrearage data monthly to the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC). OPC will utilize such data to

evaluate the financial assistance programs' process, success, and effectiveness to benefit consumers. APC Soderberg submitted written testimony to DC Water too.

DC Water intends to publish the final rulemaking on the "DC Water Cares Program" on February 19, 2021. Please, visit OPC's website or contact OPC's Water Service Division to remain updated on this matter.

Newsletter Article

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On Wednesday, January 13, 2021, at 6:30 PM, DC Water Board hosted a public hearing on the “DC Water Cares Program” Emergency Residential Relief Program. DC Water informed the public they approved \$3 million in water assistance for FY 2021 and an additional \$5 million in aid in FY 2022. Also, DC Water understands the stress and impact COVID-19 has on DC Water's consumers. For example, in November 2020, there were 14,733 delinquent cases, an increase of 9,933 cases from the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020).

DC Water consumers are responsible for paying their water bill during the pandemic and the Public Health Emergency. The presentation highlighted two available water assistance programs for DC Water consumers. The two programs are:

- Customer Assistance Program (CAP), a three-tier program that provides monthly discounts by reducing the Clean Rivers Impervious Area Charge (CRIAC) fee. The eligible customers may receive an approximate monthly deduction from \$15 to \$77.
- Emergency Relief Program provides consumers \$2,000 in one-time emergency assistance for overdue balances per fiscal year related to COVID-19.
 - o Eligible customers cannot exceed 80% Area Median Income. (Approximately \$100,000 of annual income for a family of 4)
 - o A consumer who is not the customer of record may qualify for the aid, but will have to establish proof of responsibility.

DC Water intends to publish the final rulemaking on “DC Water Cares Program” on February 19, 2021. For more information about the assistance programs, please visit these websites: <https://www.dewater.com/customerassistance> and <https://doee.dc.gov/service/criacrelief>.